

MERRY CHRISTMAS HIGHLAND!



YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENT SOURCE FOR THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND • DECEMBER 2010

TURNING THE CORNER ON FORECLOSURES

About 100 of the town's nearly 10,000 housing units is in foreclosure.

That statistic places Highland ahead of Munster and Schererville but behind Dyer and Griffith when it comes to homes that may become the property of a bank or mortgage company, a lingering witness to the depth of the U.S. mortgage crisis.

Redevelopment Director Cecile Petro said she believes Highland is on the waning side of the mess that began with lax mortgage-lending practices and led to economic upheaval felt around the globe.

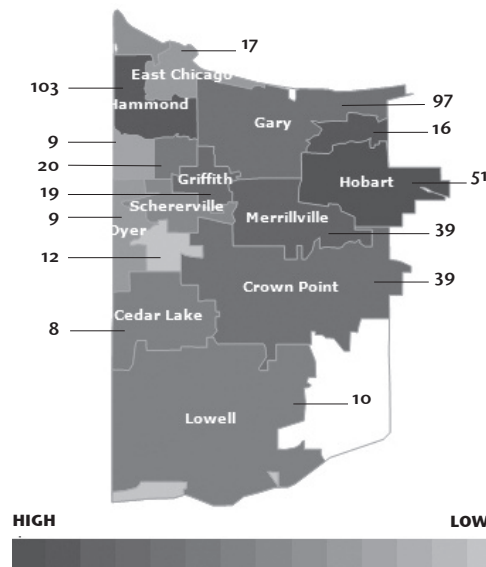
"This is a situation we will continue to track," Petro said. "We are beginning to see an end to the whole debacle. There has been a delayed impact in the Midwest. When everything started to fall apart across the country three years ago, not everyone fell at the same time."

The statistics provided by RealtyTrac include every property the bank has begun proceedings on – including those who have received a letter from the their lender because they have not made a mortgage payment in the last three to six months and those who are further along in the process.

"The number of foreclosed properties has been increasing in Highland and in our neighboring communities. Still, Highland is in really good shape. We have a track record of being a very stable community and that has helped us weather this storm," she said.

LAKE COUNTY FORECLOSURES

This is an October 2010 snapshot of foreclosure activity in Lake County, where there have been 3,326 foreclosures to date. Experts say the numbers are declining, but there will continue to be new foreclosures in the region in the near term.



SOURCE: RealtyTrac

"The housing market is expected to stabilize within the next year. Most analysts believe we are turning a corner and the numbers will begin to decrease."

If there is a bright spot, she said it is that home prices in Highland and the surrounding communities have not fallen as much as they have in other places in the country. ♡

COST-SAVING MEASURES

A decision to close 45th Street at Spring Ditch for construction saved money and shortened the construction timetable.

Public Works Director John Bach said he talked to business owners in the area before closing all four lanes of 45th for about 10 days in November.

"The construction would have caused traffic delays whether we had closed two lanes of the road at a time or closed the entire roadway and diverted traffic," Bach said. "By closing the road, we cut weeks off the construction and saved \$21,000."

SPEEDWAY SETTLEMENT

A dispute between the owners of the former Speedway SuperAmerica gas station, 8430 Kennedy Avenue, and the town has been resolved.

At issue was the removal of a pair of curb cuts, which occurred during the reconstruction of Kennedy Avenue. The owners claimed it impeded their ability to sell the land.

Both parties agreed to settle the dispute after the town said it would restore the curb cuts.

WELCOME YOUR SCHOOLS

"Your Schools" is making its debut in water bills this month.

The printed publication was suspended as a cost-saving measure while the administration looked for a way to continue providing information about the schools while reducing the price.

"We have really great information we want to share with the community," Superintendent Mike Boskovich said.

"The town's cooperation has given us a more cost-efficient solution to the problem."

GOVERNMENT OPENINGS

There are openings on most of the boards and commissions that help govern the town. The boards include Redevelopment Commission, Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Board of Sanitary Commissioners, Sanitary Board and the newly formed Main Street Commission.

If you'd like to participate in town government, the process is simple.

Fill out an application and return it to the Clerk-Treasurer's office. Applications are available online at www.highland.in.gov or Town Hall, 3333 Ridge Road.

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NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?

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CENSUS CONSENSUS

HIGH RESPONSE GIVES HIGHLAND EDGE OVER OTHER COMMUNITIES WHEN TAPPING FEDERAL RESOURCES

With an 84 percent response rate, Highland residents bested the national and statewide participation in the census.

The high response gives Highland an edge over communities who had fewer residents participate, particularly when it comes to tapping into federal funding that is allocated based on census demographics.

This tally is preliminary and does not include residents who were counted by census workers during home visits earlier this year. When those results are added in, Highland's numbers are expected to go even higher.

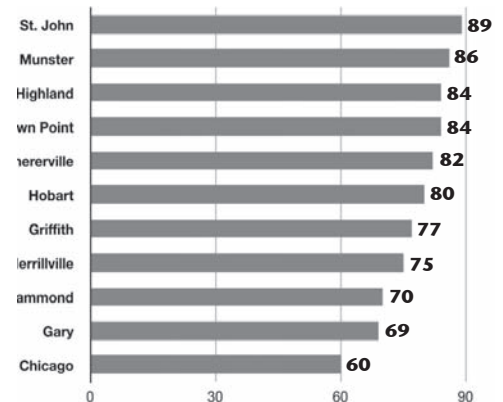
It has been estimated that communities lose \$1,000 every time one individual is not counted. The loss to a community for a family of four that is not counted: \$33,000 over 10 years. These funds help pay for vital services and programs.

Data gathered during the count is used to help determine the distribution of federal funds to local government and to the state. Census counts are also used to redraw both federal and state legislative districts.

"Residents of Highland should be congratulated for their efforts to provide an

LAKE COUNTY RESPONSES

A sampling of census response rates shows how Highland fares compared to its neighbors.



above-average response rate," said Redevelopment Director Cecile Petro, who is one of three members of the town's census team. Other members of the team are Building Commissioner Ken Mika and Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin. "These figures are very important for Highland because they are utilized for the distribution of funds from the state and federal governments."

AUDIT PROMPTS NEW FINANCIAL PROCESSES

The Indiana State Board of Accounts has given Highland a clean audit and reported that the financial transactions of the office are reflected in the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

State auditors made suggestions both parties agree will help streamline processes and record-keeping going forward.

"We welcome the input of the examiners," Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin said. "We are in a continual process of refinement and improving what we do. They help us do that."

As a result, Griffin said he and the department heads are coordinating their efforts in terms of reporting capital assets and streamlining various work processes.

Capital assets include anything that

improves the value of the governmental unit – in this case the town – such as the purchase of new police cars, acquisition of property for government use or road improvements.

"We ask the state examiners to be tough on us. It's one of the ways we get better. Always striving to do a better job is one of the reasons we take the extra step of compiling the CAFR," Griffin said. "There are 1,666 governmental entities in Indiana that could compile a CAFR each year, but only 20 do. We are proud to be one of them. Ultimately, this makes us better at what we do for the citizens of Highland."

The CAFR is available at Town Hall and online at www.highland.in.gov by clicking on the Clerk-Treasurers page.



FROM HIGHLAND ...

Hundreds of soldiers will have a merrier Christmas, thanks to the efforts of more than 150 local volunteers and countless others who donated items to the cause.

More than 500 boxes and a dozen unit crates have been shipped to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Spearheading the effort was Highland resident Colleen Aguirre, who created the not-for-profit organization known as Operation SOS — which stands for Support Our Service members — to provide comfort and assistance to members of the military.

"I have been absolutely delighted with the response we have received from Highland," Aguirre said. "I want to thank the school children who brought items for the soldiers. Many of them made personal Christmas cards to send with the boxes."

"The town has really gotten behind this. People have been extremely generous."

I was making trips to Lincoln Center almost every day to pick up items. We never could have done this without all of the support we have gotten from Highland."

Councilman Dan Vassar, who has been volunteering with Operation SOS since it began in 2008, said he is thrilled Aguirre has brought her organization to Highland.

"Our soldiers do so much for all of us. It feels good to be able to do something for them," Vassar said. "The goal is to help our soldiers know how much they are appreciated. More than 500 soldiers will have a brighter Christmas, thanks to the efforts of everyone in town, who took the time to help out."

... WITH LOVE



HOLIDAY SAFETY – IT'S IN YOUR HANDS

'Tis the season where crimes of opportunity present themselves when people are traveling, shopping and spending.

Police Chief Pete Hojnicky said there are steps we can take to protect ourselves and our property during the upcoming holidays.

- Put lights/radios/TVs on timers when leaving for an extended time.
- Have someone pick up your mail and newspapers when traveling.
- Put your home on the police "vacation checklist" when out of town.
- Have someone shovel your driveway and walkways.

- Park an extra vehicle (if available) in your driveway.
- Take in your trash cans or your neighbor's trash cans.
- Shop with relatives/friends.
- Carry only the cash and credit cards you need.
- Lock your vehicle and store valuables in the trunk.
- Park in a well-lit area.
- Remove coins, radar detectors, GPS units and other valuables from the interior of your vehicle.
- Be vigilant and aware of your surroundings.
- Carry your purse close to you. Don't allow it to hang down where it can be snatched.
- Be cautious about giving out personal information.

HOLIDAY ELVES AT WORK

The Highland Parks and Recreation workers who deck Main Square Park are the same elves who build and maintain the displays that make the park magical for the holiday season.

The train adorning the center of the park, the nutcrackers — even the lighted candles, candy canes and snowmen that dot the corners of Main Square — were created in-house by Park Director Chris Kubisz and his staff. Some sculptures are 15 feet tall and weigh as much as 200 pounds.

"The park always looks so beautiful during the holidays and we have the park staff to thank," Town Council Mark Herak said. "These lighted sculptures are really works of art."



VISIT A CHRISTMAS STORY

Enjoy the beauty and artistry of the movie, "A Christmas Story," as you walk the gallery of decorated Christmas trees at the Indiana Welcome Center through December.

There is no cost to tour the exhibit, which features animatronic window displays depicting scenes from the movie as well as activities and events.

Have your picture taken on Santa's mountain and then slide down, just like in the movie!

WHEN: Now through Jan. 2

HOURS: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m.-8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Closed Christmas and New Year's Day.

WHERE: Indiana Welcome Center, Kennedy Avenue at the Borman

INFO: Call (219) 989-7770 or visit www.achristmasstorycomeshome.com



HOT LUNCH FOR SENIORS

A nutrition site is offered weekdays at Lincoln Center. Hot lunches are served at 11:30 a.m. for a \$2 donation if the participant is over 60 years of age.

WHEN: 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. weekdays

WHERE: Lincoln Center

INFO: Reservations must be made in advance by calling Dorothy at (219) 838-0114 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

GIGGLE WITH YOUR TOT

Wiggles & Giggles is designed for 1½ to 2 year old toddlers who have not met many children. You and your child will enjoy age-appropriate activities, stories and crafts.

WHEN: 9:30-10:30 a.m. Mondays

JAN. 3 – APRIL 18

WHERE: Lincoln Center

COST: \$67 residents/\$77 nonresidents

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: DEC. 27

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

CHANNEL YOUR INNER YOGI

Learn relaxing exercises that relieve tension, breathing techniques that restore vitality and meditation that brings calmness and clarity of mind.

WHEN: Wednesdays JAN. 12 – MAR 2

BEGINNERS: 6:15-7:40 p.m.

INTERMEDIATE: 7:50-9:15 p.m.

WHERE: Lincoln Center

COST: \$79 residents/\$82 nonresidents

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JAN. 5

NOTE: Bring a towel, blanket or yoga mat.

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

TWELFTH NIGHT BONFIRE

Bring your Christmas tree to Main Square Park for a Twelfth Night bonfire, officially marking the close of the Holiday Festival of Lights. Hot chocolate will be served.

WHEN: 6 p.m. JAN. 6

WHERE: Main Square Park

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

DITCH THE WORKOUT

Zumba is a high-energy, Latin dance-inspired workout for all ages and exercise levels. Every dance contains moves – which you will learn in class – that repeat with each song.

WHEN: 6-7 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays

JAN. 5-28

WHERE: Lincoln Center

COST: \$50 residents/\$53 nonresidents

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: DEC. 29

NOTE: Wear comfortable clothes and gym shoes. No jeans. Bring a 1 to 5 lb. set of hand weights, water bottle and towel.

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION

Preschoolers will learn their ABCs, colors, shapes and numbers while building vocabulary, making crafts and sharpening their listening skills and attention span.

3-4 YEAR OLDS: 8:45-10:45 a.m. or

noon-2 p.m. TUE/THU JAN. 4 - APRIL 28

COST: \$176 residents/\$186 nonresidents

4-5 YEAR OLDS: 8:45-10:45 a.m. or noon-

2 p.m. MON/WED/FRI JAN. 3 - APRIL 29

WHERE: Lincoln Center

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JAN. 2

NOTE: Children must be potty trained and able to leave parents for two hours.

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

FRED'S ART CLASS FOR KIDS

Students aged 10-16 learn drawing, cartooning and painting. Each session builds on what the students learned in the previous class. During the final week, budding artists will put everything they learned together to complete a picture.

WHEN: 4:30-5:30 p.m. Fridays

JAN. 7 - FEB. 11

WHERE: Lincoln Center

COST: \$35 residents/\$38 nonresidents

REGISTRATION BEGINS: JAN. 2

NOTE: Complete list of supplies will be available at the first class.

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.-



**RING IN THE
NEW YEAR ...**

**NEW YEAR'S EVE
FIREWORKS CELEBRATION**

As part of the season's Festival of Lights activities, there will be a midnight fireworks extravaganza at Main Square Park on New Year's Eve. Bring the family to enjoy the show. Hot chocolate will be served.